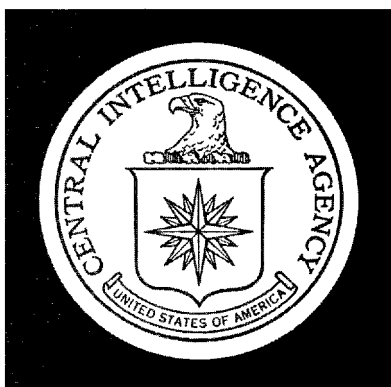


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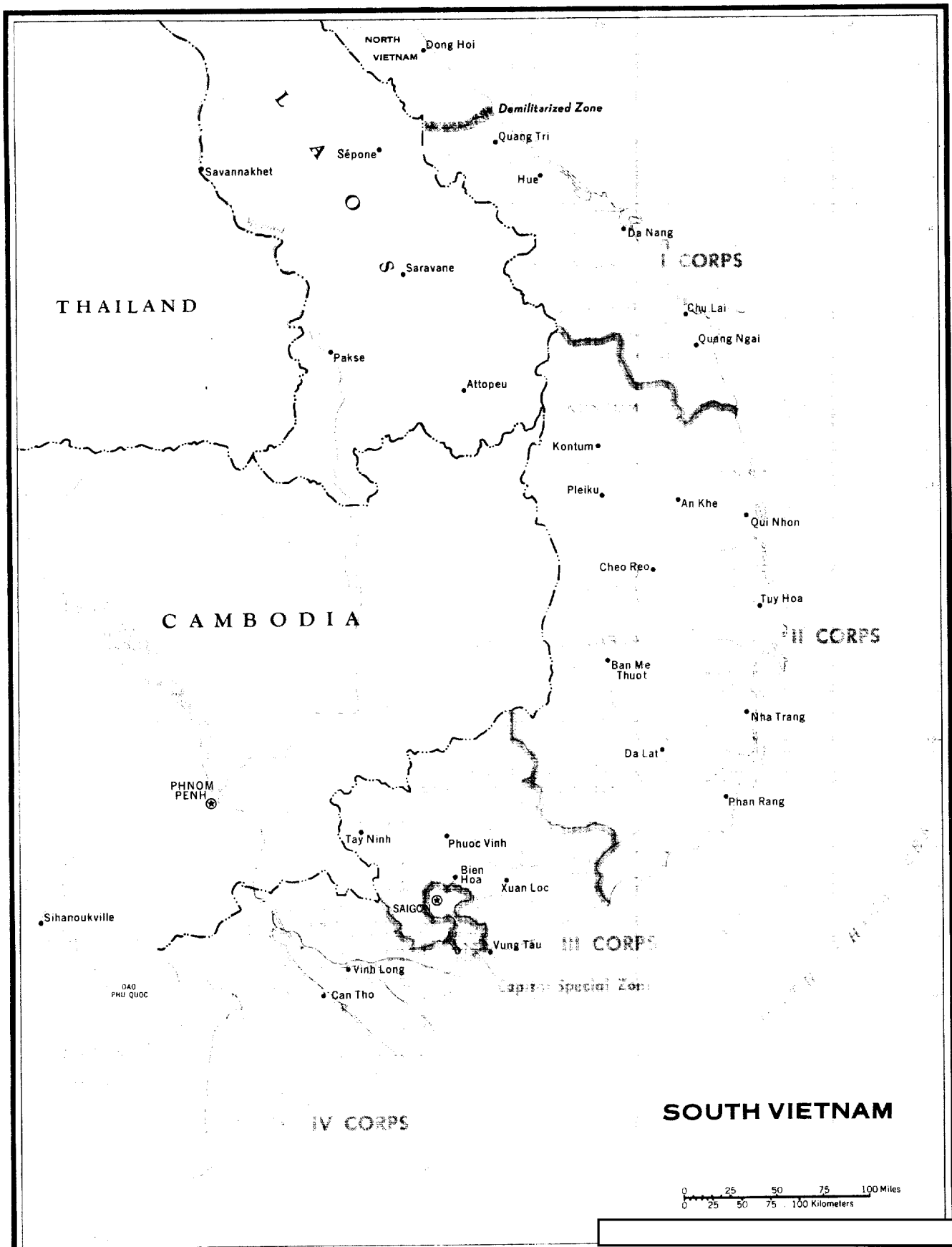
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\*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Constituent Assembly continues to make progress on the constitution, and soon will begin to debate important provisions dealing with the legislative branch of the future government.

The assembly recently completed its work on the constitution's second chapter dealing with rights and duties of citizens. One section of this chapter stipulates that military personnel elected to office or serving in the central government must be demobilized or take a military leave of absence. The government's current military leaders examined these provisions before the assembly approved them, and apparently registered no strenuous objections.

Military leaders, however, have made it clear that they want a more even division of powers between the executive and legislative branches than is now outlined in the assembly's working draft, which favors a relatively powerful legislature. Specific issues to which the military leaders have taken exception are the power of the legislature to dismiss the prime minister and the cabinet, and the exercise of constitutional emergency powers by the legislature rather than by the executive. Several assembly leaders had indicated earlier that they would exert their influence during the upcoming debate to work out a compromise on these issues.

Meanwhile, some friction has reappeared in relations between the assembly and the government. Assembly officials feel that the government instigated criticism of the assembly's work at a recent Saigon labor meeting and in a series of press articles. They are particularly resentful of what they consider to be government-inspired criticism in view of their earlier agreement with the ruling Directorate to work out differences over the constitution in private.

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Considering the steady progress of the assembly in drafting a constitution, however, resentment in the assembly does not seem to be of serious proportions, and relations with the government will probably undergo more ups and downs before the constitution is completed.

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: US forces have been participating in 11 of 34 battalion-size or larger operations in recent days. A number of small scale engagements have been reported in various parts of the country but there has been little significant activity. In the past three or four days, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces have lost over 250 killed while friendly casualties have been about 45 killed and some 160 wounded.

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Yugoslavia: The pro forma nature of Belgrade's protest to the US over yesterday's dynamiting of its missions reflects a desire to prevent these incidents from damaging Yugoslavia's good relations with the US.

Belgrade will be particularly concerned not to harm prospects for continued financial support for its economic reform program.

The series of explosions presumably was the work of Yugoslav anti-Communist emigré groups, who seek periodically to embarrass the Tito regime by such acts of violence. This is the first time, however, that the emigres, who are believed to be few in number, have been able to strike against widely scattered installations simultaneously. As in the past, the incidents were timed to coincide with an important Yugoslav observance, in this instance the 21st anniversary of Yugoslavia's formal establishment as a Communist state.

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UK-Malta: London has rejected Malta's abrogation of their bilateral defense agreement, and has no immediate plans to comply with Maltese demands for a withdrawal of all British military forces from the island. The British hope that, by playing down the matter and by hinting that Britain's commitment to provide Malta with extensive financial assistance is tied to retention of the defense agreement, the Maltese Government will in time find a face-saving way to retract its ultimatum. The British have told US officials they are prepared to live with minor pressure against their forces on Malta, but that major harassment will cause them to consider an immediate and complete withdrawal.

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Israel-Syria: Israel and Syria failed again yesterday to make any progress toward an accommodation of their differences over farming rights in the demilitarized zone. Their second meeting within a week broke up amid accusations by both sides that the other had attempted to discuss extraneous issues. A third meeting of the UN-chaired Mixed Armistice Commission is scheduled for 2 February.

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Dahomey: The political situation is tense, with some army leaders appearing increasingly critical of General Soglo's government, which they now view as inefficient and tolerant of the re-emergence of traditional civilian political rivalries. Spontaneous village demonstrations over taxes, which reportedly occurred in two areas on 24 January, may heighten tension and encourage current coup plotting. The success of any coup would depend on the backing of Chief of Staff Alley, the strong man behind the present regime.

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